

THREE LETTERS

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TO

Abraham Bishop, Esquire,

CONTAINING

SOME STRICTURES ON HIS

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED, IN THE WHITE MEETING-HOUSE, ON THE
EVENING PRECEDING THE PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT,

SEPTEMBER 1800,

WITH SOME REMARKS ON HIS CONDUCT
AT THE LATE ELECTION.

BY CONNECTICUTENSIS.

" Likewise also these filthy dreamers, despise dominion and
speak evil of dignities,

Raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame,
And their mouth speaketh great swelling words."

JUDG, part of 8th, 13th and 16th verses.

HARTFORD :

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1800.



LETTER I.

SIR,

YOU have lately written, pronounced and published an oration, which you denominate "Connecticut Republicanism." How well it deserves this title, will be clearly seen in the following pages.

Perhaps you may feel flattered, (*if Mr. Bishop be susceptible of flattery*) that this oration has been the subject of so much notoriety; but you will please to recollect that great and good productions frequently excite less attention than those which are mischievous and monstrous. This is true in the natural, as well as the moral and political world. A rattle-snake, or an African tyger would doubtless be an object of as much curiosity, in the city of New-Haven, as the most beautiful bird, or an elegant Arabian horse; and an ourang-outang would draw together more spectators, than the most finished of our race.

Nor ought you to take much pride from the consideration that you have already felt one "rod for the fool's back," from a distinguished citizen of New-Haven, and that others will probably succeed to open the wounds afresh. Remember, Sir, that the learned Bishop Watson addressed several letters to your fellow-labourer, Thomas Paine; and if those who attack you may not equal that pious di-

vine, yet they do not fall farther below him, than you do, in talents, below that strolling preacher of Jacobinism—that blasphemer against religion and its divine author.

If a Bedlamite loosed from his fetters should attempt to fire our buildings by night, he need take no consolation to himself that wise and great men were engaged to stop his career of madness, and to chain him to a spot where his capacity of doing mischief, might be ended.

With these views I beg you to feel as little elevation of spirit at the notice taken of you as the case will warrant; and I apprehend you will find no more just cause of boasting, than your brother Holt has for being publicly *noticed*, tried, fined and imprisoned for libelling the government of his country,

One great object of your Oration appears to be to effectuate a thorough change of men and measures in our general and particular governments; and to produce a total reformation among the people of this peaceful and happy state, in managing their important political concerns. I am then to consider you, Abraham Bishop, Esq. as setting yourself up as a *reformer*—a reformer of the manners of Connecticut.—I am indeed *smitten* with the thought: but A. Bishop, Esq. has *indeed* assumed this great and arduous duty. He has indeed *kindly* offered himself as the guide of the *deluded* citizens of Connecticut: And this is offered *gratis* too; no fee is demanded. You instruct, advise, counsel, and exhort *gratis*.—Never before, I believe, was you found *laboring* for the *good* of your neighbours, without reward or *expectation of reward*: whether you are now *so* found, I will hereafter enquire.

But, Mr. Republican, I wish to know what pretensions you have to commence a *reformer*? You

do not *profess* to be the *agent* of others—you appear in your *proper* person, and hold up Abraham Bishop, Esq. of New-Haven, as a REFORMER. This being the case I am constrained to tell you that several qualities will be *certainly* useful, which you *certainly* do not possess, unless you have received them since I last saw you.

First. A reformer should possess good *talents*. Men will not be induced to relinquish all their ancient habits and remove their confidence from all those in power, except from pressing necessity, or unless, swayed and diverted by superior skill. Now, sir, no person ever deemed you a man of solid, useful good sense. You, sometimes amuse with flashes of wit and brilliancy; but *they* are transient, and answer the purpose of a “dim taper in a dismal cavern, viz. to increase the horrors of the darkness.” Such a man never will be sought as a guide.—Sober people will never leave old and tried counsellors and adhere to such visionaries. As well might you expect that the traveller would reject the plain and beaten road, enlightened by the sun, and enter a dismal swamp to follow a *Jack-with-a-lantern*.

Secondly, Stability and uniformity are essential characteristics of a wise man—a man to be confided in as a *reformer*. Your instability and destitution of uniformity, except in one or two particulars which I will directly mention, have, long since, been proverbial. About twenty years since you began to exhibit yourself on the theatre of life as a writer in a public office. From that period to this, you have assumed and attempted to perform all the characters of a lawyer—a traveller—a pedagogue—a lecturer on morality—an instructor in oratory—a church Priest*—a clerk of courts—a county surveyor—a speculator in various kinds of land—a

* This was only an *attempt* for you could not get orders.

gardner, and *now a preacher of sedition*. Nor have your *political opinions* been more fixed. About ten years since you wrote, published, and preached wherever you could get hearers, against the new constitution. For this Wm. Hillhouse, jun. Esq. administered to you a public chastisement, which, I fancy, you yet feel. For several succeeding years, you was constantly whining and murmuring against government in all its departments. In 1798, being in quest of an office, you explicitly and publicly changed your sentiments; and thus became clerk of the Superior Court.

The exceptions to this part of your character are, that for ten or twelve years past, you have been unceasingly employed in pouring all manner of abuse on the Clergy and on the leading doctrines of Christianity. For this purpose, about ten years since, you appeared several times on public stages, exhibiting the mountebank tricks of a juggler, and propagating sentiments tending to destroy the confidence of the people in the ministers of the gospel.

You have also been uniform in your abuse of all men in power—all lawyers—all merchants, and all the clergy, with the exception of *one*, to whom you have *too often* given the *fraternal embrace* for his own honor, and for the peace and harmony of his society.

What instance can be produced of your applause of an individual? Of whom have you spoken, at any time, except to tarnish his fame with your calumniating and pestilential breath? What neighbour—what fellow-citizen have you not attempted to ridicule and blackguard? And it is a remarkable fact that in an oration of 64 pages, with a preface, notes and an appendix, you should have charged the grossest crimes on our merchants—our men of property—our lawyers—our officers from

the highest to the lowest—our Clergy with all who adhere to them ; and that in this vast collection of slanderous things, not one word of applause—nay not one word of excuse or palliation for their conduct or motives, should have escaped your lips, except that you have selected about ten democrats with Mr. Jefferson at their head, and paid them a *small* compliment in a note.

Thirdly. To be a successful reformer you ought to possess the confidence of the people. To this you have no claim. Never have you holden any office by the suffrages of your fellow citizens—never did you receive any appointment except in consequence of the character and station of your father, as I will demonstrate in another place.

Thus situated, Mr. Bishop, how could you expect to make one proselyte by your Oration ? With this weight *on* your character, and without any weight *of* character, you might rationally have anticipated that *chagrin* which now unfits you for business ; but could hope for no other elevation than to make you “ a fixed figure for the hand of scorn to point his slow and moving finger at.”

The *manner*, Sir, in which this Oration was ushered upon the public, demands consideration. A society of Yale-College, instituted for the promotion of friendship and science, elected you their anniversary orator. They were entirely ignorant that when you was President of that society, a committee was appointed to solicit you to resign the office, on account of your profanity ; and that you yielded to the solicitation, rather than hazard an expulsion. They were also without a suspicion, that you were so faithless as to pronounce an Oration at *their request*, directly attacking all the venerable institutions of Connecticut, and in pointed opposition to principles which they deemed sacred. Much less could they have conjectured that you could have

caused it to be printed without their sanction. Perceiving that your effrontery had over-leaped all the bounds of decency, they met and voted to dispense with the Oration. Still you persisted in declaiming: and thus you *palmed* on the world this heterogeneous production.

Reflect also, Sir, that for several years past the students of Yale-College have occupied the evening preceding the commencement, by public speaking in the brick meeting-house.—That on this occasion the members and officers of that university—the literary gentlemen—the friends and connections of the scholars with a brilliant and respectable audience, assemble. All this you knew. How extremely uncivil—how ungentlemanly was it then for you to attempt to interrupt those stated and beneficial exercises by your rant and nonsense? Suppose, Sir, when an audience is assembled to celebrate the 4th of July—to lament the death of Gen. Washington, or to commemorate any other great event, a *quack* in medicine, should erect a stage contiguous to such a congregation, and there deal out his nostrums and prescriptions, with the vain glory, common to Empirics—what would decent and sober men say of such a Quack? How would they spurn at his ribaldry? How would they despise such a low, ill-bred, indecorous mountebank? And yet where lies the difference between a Quack in medicine and a Quack in politics—between a *juggling pretender* to cure all diseases of the human body, and a *juggling projector* of cures for the body politic.

I proceed now to the Oration.—It is extremely obvious that all your assertions and comments on facts, with your various rhapsodical prophecies, ejaculations and lamentations, are idle and senseless, unless that *political delusion* exists on which you have professedly built. Now, Sir, what proof have

you offered of this *delusion*? The good people of the United States, and particularly of Connecticut, are earnestly solicited to believe (and threatened with heavy curses in case of their unbelief) that all those who acquiesce in the administration of our government are poor, misguided, *deluded* wretches, rapidly approaching to a state of idiocy or distraction: and the testimony adduced in support of the idea is, that A. Bishop, Esq. a restless, chagrined and ambitious declaimer, assures them that this is their condition. The people, Sir, will require more evidence. The force of tropes and figures—of rant and railing, will be insufficient to unsettle the public mind, and to destroy that state of things which rests on experience, reflection and conviction. As well might you expect to compel a Christian to exchange his ideas of the pure joys of heaven for the gross impurities of a Mahometan paradise, as that an open opposer of principles supported by the sanction of ages, should produce assent to his wild reveries in politics—his motley and mongrel systems of government. Instead, Sir, of writing, speaking and dispersing this oration, you might have arrayed yourself in the Harlequin dress of an ancient *crusader* in religion, or a modern *Quixotte* in chivalry, and at midnight, have gone through the streets of New-Haven, with lighted matches in your hands, attempting to set on fire the houses of the citizens lest they should fall and bury in ruins the families which inhabit them.—Methinks, I see you thus equipped, enter the dwelling of your neighbour, and I hear you thus address the family, “I am come as your friend, to set on fire this building.—I know that it appears strong, neat and elegant, but I have discovered, by my own genius and the aid of other incendiaries, that this appearance is all *delusion*, and that it will soon fall and crush every individual to death.—Know ye not, ye children and domestics, that one

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Alexander Hamilton, a chief architect in erecting this house, designed it for a *prison*.—Know ye not that he with all your *great, wise* and *rich* neighbours, have been constantly contriving schemes, since the foundation stone was first laid in 1787,* to destroy your lives and liberties—to overthrow the house, or else to chain you to the timbers in the garret?—I am come therefore to burn this building and free you from these mighty evils.—Think not that the house will be plundered while it is on fire—no—Your liberty is all that is aimed at.”——

The father replies, “*Why, Mr. Bishop, this strange attack on my peace and happiness? Does not this house shelter me from inclement seasons and render me and my family comfortable? Am I not contented—nay delighted with my situation?—My children are all cheerful, virtuous and happy. My sons and daughters are receiving their educations; they obey, with pleasure, the orders of us their parents; we indulge them in dress suited to their rank; and they resort to places of innocent amusement. On every sabbath they follow us to church, and we verily believe that we are becoming wiser and better. No complaint hath yet been heard within these walls, we are restrained of no rational liberty and we fear no mischief. Pray, Mr. Bishop leave us to ourselves,—if we are indeed deluded, we are happy in the delusion.*”——You, with an inflamed countenance, go on, “Children and servants, “these are delusion’s *bandy works*.”—I am bound by the love and *fraternity* I bear you, to declare that this your father and master, who has just now spoken, is *one* of this *combination* to destroy you. Know ye not that when he purchased this place he became indebted to the amount of nearly a *one hundredth* part of its value—that it is now “surveyed and mortgaged” for this money and† that for part, he is paying 6 per cent. for part 3

* The time of the adoption of the New Constitution.

† See Preface.

per cent. and that though the rest is deferred, yet it must be paid, and do you not see in this debt the foundation of slavery?—Nay, my dear creatures, already has your father begun to plan this house for a prison—already is he looking out for a *King-post* for the pretended security of the timbers, but in reality, to convert it into a *cruel bastille*. What *young sapling* in the “arms” of yonder *nodding, waving forest*, is to be this *King-post*, no democrat can tell; but rely on it, that soon it will be fixed, and then you will be chained here to all eternity, or this house, timbers, stone, bricks and planks, will fall with a *tremendous crash*, on your dear—dear heads—And then—Oh! and then! “*Thundering noises must drown the cries of your brethren and children in the agonies of death.—No father to watch the symptoms of decaying life! No mother to drop a tear over a dying son! No sister to stretch out the hand of faithful affection and to soften the pillow in the moment of dissolving nature!*” And now, my dear creatures, after such *amazing pathos*, let me touch my *match* to a bunch of *swingling tee* and burn up your house, and you will be freed from these dreadful calamities.”

LETTER II.

BUT, Sir, I will not deal with you simply in general observations. I will survey your beloved, though misshapen and ill-begotten child, in all its features and point out *his* predominant characteristics.

† See page 18.

* You will observe I treat it as masculine, not from its strength but because I would not insult the ladies by calling it feminine.

In your preface you assert, in paragraph 4th, that it is well known that, in 1787, a number of our leading men were holding meetings to establish a confederated monarchy.—That the speech of Gen. Hamilton in the convention, favoured the same object.—That our leading men avow that this country can never be governed without an hereditary monarch.—That appropriate plans, of monarchy are adopted by administration. That our federal papers are filled with reflections on liberty and republicanism, and that Fenno is the mouth piece of federalism.—Now, sir, these are naked assertions. I, in reply, say that each of them is false. It belongs to you to prove them; and if truth had been your aim you would have furnished that proof, or have omitted them. One of your assertions, viz. *that*, respecting federal papers, I agree, is to stand or fall, by recurring to those papers. And here, sir, I challenge you to produce a newspaper published in New-England or to the southward of New-England, excepting Fenno's and Porcupine's, (which you know have not been for years either read or patronized by federalists generally) which contains a reflection on liberty or republicanism, or a syllable in favour of monarchy. I assert that no such paper can be found.

In the 2d, page of this preface, after having said that a monarchy is decidedly before us, and having mentioned the reasons for the assertion, you have the following observation, "The men now in place, have been the contrivers or advocates of these measures." This is a plain declaration that *all* men now holding offices in the national or state governments, are either the contrivers or advocates of monarchy. You know; you knew, when you penned that sentence, that it was not only false, but an *infamous falsehood*. These men have all *sworn* to support a *republican* government—you then charge them with perjury—with treason! with *contriving* to destroy

that constitution under which they live and to which they have bound themselves by an appeal to heaven. Think, sir, what it is for A. Bishop, to charge all the men in office in the United States, with these flagitious crimes!

In the 6th paragraph of this preface you tell us of the wonder with which our southern brethren view the aristocracy of Connecticut and ascribe this aristocracy to what you term "federal policy" and refer us to your appendix* for the proof.

On this paragraph I remark, first that your proposition respecting *your* southern brethren is not quite accurately stated. It should read thus, "Our fellow labourers in the great business of destroying order and religion, behold with fear and anger that happy state of society which prevails in Connecticut, and which has erected such impregnable bulwarks against our attacks on all the venerable institutions in the United States." Such a reading is much more consonant to the real state of things; and is conformable to the ideas of all sober people.

I remark secondly, How could your evil genius lead you to ascribe the uniformity and stability of our elections to "*federal policy*?" Know you not, that the practice of placing counsellors on the nomination list, according to *seniority* and without regard to the *number of votes*, provided they are of the first twenty, has been uniformly adhered to, ever since the first settlement of the state? And do you not also know that this rule is never applied to the nomination for Congress? Why then term it "*federal policy*?" Why but to mislead, confuse and ensnare; which appears to be the great business of your life?

In the 8th paragraph of this preface you say, "For eleven years freedom of the press and of

* See 7th page of appendix.

opinion have been restrained?" What do you mean? Within this period you and others have been permitted to speak, write, and publish all the abusive things which malignant hearts could invent, or noisy tongues utter, on every subject which you and they chose to discuss; and hitherto there hath been but *one* prosecution in this state, though I confess *there ought to have been many*. Nay is not the promulgation of your Oration, irresistible proof that, not only liberty, but *alarming licentiousness* of speech and of the press, exists? What farther indulgence does a *good man* wish than to speak the *truth*—what greater do *you* wish than to charge every great and good man with the most base and detestible crimes? If you would have more slander abound, you must have a second *apostacy*, at least as great as the first, and a new dictionary of abusive words.

In your redoubtable attack on our commercial system, you appear to have two objects in view, viz. first to destroy the reputation of merchants; and secondly to beggar them and all those immediately connected with them.

To effect the first object you say pages 3d, and 9th, that commerce cannot support itself—that it is not worth what it costs—that our merchants *know* this, but that they are lending their aid to the propagation and belief of a *forged story*, because it is beneficial to them; and that this their aid is afforded upon the same principle that a gang of counterfeiters give currency to a "well counterfeited bill 'till by accident the deceit is discovered, by which time the counterfeiter has gained all his ends."—You had before charged "men in place" with perjury and treason: Here you charge merchants, "every well informed merchant," with giving that species of aid to a false and forged story, "because it is beneficial to him," which forgers and counterfeiters give to a false and forged bank note. And

is it indeed true that gentlemen who have sustained irreproachable characters through life—gentlemen, who have never before been *suspected* of want of integrity—gentlemen who retain an elevated rank in society for their fairness, punctuality, and honor, should be arraigned, in a body, before the tribunal of the public, and there charged with such infamous conduct? Merchants are indeed attached to the government of their country; but are they, on this account, to suffer such calumny?

Another object with you is to beggar these merchants and all those dependent on commerce. And why? Because you think commerce useless and destructive. On this part of the subject you have been sufficiently answered by the Pamphlet to which I have already alluded.—I will add that it has been an object with these states, for more than a century, to encourage and protect commerce. Great, wise, and good men, of all parties, with *few* exceptions, have concurred in opinion on this subject, and it is *rather too late*, for a fool or a mad-man to persuade the United States to abandon this source of greatness, wealth, and respectability. But your system of opposition to commerce is built on the proposition that foreign nations will come to our ports, bring us their produce and take ours, on equally good terms with those now afforded by our merchants. And are you indeed so stupid as not to see that those nations either in their purchases of us, or sales to us, will make us pay for protecting this trade? And may we not pay our own farmers, mechanics, seamen and merchants as well as those of other nations? Mr. Bishop pray attend to those things with which you are conversant.—The people of New-Haven will certainly prefer the opinion of such men as Isaac Beers and Elias Shipman on this subject to yours, although they may allow you, as County Surveyor, to measure their land with your "*four rod chain*."

Again, you say, in pages 6th, and 7th, extensive commerce makes a great bustle of wealth—some large fortunes—many bankruptcies—and you add with a view to inflame the public mind, that *farmers* loose their debts by these bankruptcies—that mortgages abound more on our records—and that the people, “including public and private indebtedness,” are more deeply involved, than at any season before.

Respecting “public indebtedness” to the United States, if Mr. Secretary Wolcott is to be credited before Albert Gallatin and his puffer A. Bishop, Esq. and I fancy that those who know the characters will *judge accurately*, the debt is reduced, in eleven years, almost four millions of dollars: and this too, notwithstanding, millions have been expended in suppressing an insurrection which Mr. Gallatin contributed to produce, and in protecting our commerce from the ravages of that nation, whose praises, you and he, are incessantly chaunting.

It may be further remarked that Connecticut was *then* indebted to an amount of nearly two millions of dollars, from which she is now discharged, excepting about twelve thousand dollars; and has, *in her treasury*, almost two millions: and this *mighty* change has been effected by certain “*operations of federal policy*,” such as the funding system, the assumption of state debts, &c. &c.—Thus far of your “*public indebtedness*.”

Respecting “private indebtedness” you have made several shameless assertions.—Do our farmers *suffer* by the bankruptcies of merchants? You know that the farmers, either give short credit or receive the cash.—They will justify me in saying, that at no former period could they obtain such advanta-

geous sales of their produce, and receive such satisfactory payments.

But you say "mortgages abound."—If, I here admit that you speak the truth, what follows? If in consequence of the immense speculations, a degree of distrust is created and men are therefore more cautious in taking security, is it certain that there is more indebtedness? Or if more indebtedness, are the people impoverishing? Do you think New-York, Hartford and New-Haven are more opulent now than at the beginning of this century? You must say, yes—but *mortgages* more abound, and there is *far* more *indebtedness*.—Industry, enterprise and exertion will produce great commercial operations—*indebtedness*, to a certain extent, will be the consequence, but this is no argument of poverty, or a decline in wealth.—Ask the lawyers and judges of courts and look at your own records and say, if you can do it without a blush, what is the difference in the number of suits now instituted for debt in one year, and in the years 1786 and 1787.—You know that the comparison will show that you "have erred and loved to err."—Then, the people could not pay—officers could not collect—consequently suits were multiplied to an alarming degree. In 1786 more suits were instituted for debt in the counties of Hartford and New-Haven, and I presume in the other counties, than in the three last years.

Again. Our farmers are now full of money—their produce every where commands cash. The face of the country—public and private buildings—the dress of the citizens—roads and bridges and every other object presents marks of growing wealth and prosperity.

But here I must meet your *logical* reasoning. You seem to admit in page 6th that there is this

thrift—these evidences of wealth; but then you say “Individuals appear to the world most thrifty when they are most thriftily expending their mortgaged estates.” What does this reasoning prove? The inference is clear, if a country exhibits every possible proof of riches, depend on it *that* country is *rapidly declining*. If the eye of the benevolent traveller meets, in every village, spacious fields well fenced, good houses—elegant public buildings, handsome carriages and well dressed inhabitants, he heaves a deep sigh, drops a tear and exclaims, “Oh what marks of poverty and wretchedness! Poor *deluded* people—rapidly going to destruction! OH DELUSION!—DELUSION OH”!! This same traveller, in another country, beholds a race of people houseless, or in log-huts—penniless and in rags, shivering with the cold and presenting meagre faces, and sings “Oh my country—My country. —This is indeed *Boon—Boon—Oh the * length and depth of Mr. Bishop’s oration*”!!

This is your logic, Sir, and I only wish to enquire whether you learned it in your travels through France?

I omit here to notice the gross charges which you bring against all *bank directors* in the note to your 5th page, because to designate particularly the objects of your abuse, would be to speak of every man and character which you notice, democrats, jacobins and infidels excepted.

In your remarks on the commercial system, you have with an air of malicious triumph mentioned the tribute which the United States pay to the Dey of Algiers. Did you not know, Sir, that this is the only method by which any nation can procure peace with those lawless pirates?—Did you not

* See page 6th and 4th line from the top.

know that your brother democrats constantly poured contempt on the government, 'till this tribute was paid : and that appeals, through every Jacobin paper, were made to the compassion of our citizens, in favor of fathers, husbands and sons, suffering cruel bondage in that country ? Do you, Sir, now insult your nation for rescuing from chains of enduring servitude, Americans in Algiers ?

You also clamour greatly, because our houses and lands are mortgaged to pay our debts. Were not our houses and lands always thus mortgaged ? Is not every man's property sacredly pledged, by laws paramount to those which govern mortgages, for the payment of what he owes ? And will any but rogues ever complain that their property is thus pledged ?

Your attack on the naval and military systems, contains nothing but what has been repeatedly said (and much better said too) by your brothers Calender, Holt, Duane, and Sam. Morfe. I cannot say how your attempt at the pathos, in the 18th, page, succeeded ; but I presume one little vegetable,* would have produced more tears with far less noise.

Your *tragi-commic* scene of the "Kings being shot at" in pages 24 and 25, *sounds* well, and contains a good share of humour and satire :—but it really appeared better in the London paper from which you borrowed it. And here I would just hint whether you have been *quite civil* in using the language of others so repeatedly, without giving credit ?

In the 21st page you commence an attack on the gentlemen of the law, and pursue it, for a considerable time, with great anger. In this excursion

* An Onion.

of abuse, there is some palliation for your conduct. You doubtless recollect having read law—having taken the oath and having attempted to obtain a subsistence by the practice of it. You also recollect that you *did not succeed*.—That industry, perseverance and talents were quite *convenient* accompaniments to a lawyer, you discovered; and relinquished the profession without having a sight at the “† keys of St. Peter.” In this situation it is no matter of surprise that you feel a *little chagrin*, and *much envy*. You have seen those of your age, and those much younger, rise to eminence in the profession and have

“ Eyed them askance with jealous leer
Malign; and to yourself thus plained—
Sight hateful! sight tormenting!”†

You *positively* assert page 22d, that “ lawyers are found ascending and descending the ladder of promotion like the angels of God in Jacob’s vision.” Now, I presume, no one will dispute the fact with you, for your situation has been admirably good to ascertain the truth, having always *stood exactly at the bottom of the ladder, looking earnestly up, and never being able to mount a single round.*

You then call lawyers “excellent stuff for transportation to foreign courts.” Here, Sir, I doubt your capacity of knowing, for you will not be deemed a competent judge of *what lawyers* will suit in foreign countries from an experiment made on the *sample*, which the ship carried, which transported A. Bishop, Esq.

In page 25th you attempt to point out *the agents in this delusion*, by which the people are duped. On this part of the subject, Sir, you have shewed a spirit of slander and wickedness, which is without a parallel

† Page 21 at bottom. † Milton’s Paradise Lost.

in any publication which has fallen under my eye. You have alledged that all our officers—all our lawyers—all our merchants and the whole body of the clergy, are combined to deceive, enslave and destroy their fellow-citizens. You have written thus, "A question is often proposed how is it possible that our greatest and most *pious* men should betray us?" And you have answered it thus "I answer because you have every thing to loose and they have every thing to gain."—You have told mankind that "greatness, wisdom and riches" are the means of propagating this *delusion*. You have explicitly accused our clergy* with thanking God for war—a *war* produced to gratify the pride, avarice, and ambition of these great men. You have said that "great political *arrangements* are like so many *armaments* against religion" and yet you charge the clergy with aiding in these arrangements. And, not to pain the refined and delicate ear with more particulars of your blackguardism, you have used every artifice to convince your hearers and readers that they should withdraw all confidence from the clergy—from men of wealth, wisdom and greatness, and treat them as corrupt, depraved, and vicious tyrants. In page 21st, in a note (not *written* by you) there is a faint attempt to rescue those *few* clergymen who are democrats, or who express no anxiety to resist Jacobinism, from that odium, with which you attempt to cover, a large and respectable majority of them.

The language of your oration is analogous to that which the infamous Robertspierre adopted, in the national convention years ago, viz. that it was the duty of the poor to arm against the rich and destroy them—nay you go farther—you attempt to arm vice, contempt and infamy against virtue, greatness, and worth.—To be born of respectable parents—to be learned in the law, or in theology—to pos-

* Page 4 line 10th, from top.

self the confidence of men—to acquire by honesty, industry, and labor, an ample estate, and to be elevated to the first stations in importance and dignity, are with you vices of great magnitude. Well earned fame should be signalized only with superior abuse and contempt, and a wreath of honor should be converted into a halter.

In page 29th, pursuing the same train of ideas, you rank among the selfish and debased, all directors of banks, judges of courts, generals of armies and captains of ships.

Now, Mr. Bishop, why this *roust* about *base-born* and *well-born*? Is there any such distinction known in Connecticut? Look through the state and say if men are promoted to offices, or acquire peculiar respect, on account of their parentage? The only idea, which offers any support to this opinion, is, that you once alledged, as a reason why you should obtain the office of clerk of the county court at New-Haven, that you was *town born*.

Again.—Is a man despised for his poverty? You know that virtue and worth are respected wherever found.—You also know that in Connecticut there is as fair a chance for talents to meet all that reward which Connecticut can bestow, as in any place on earth.—You also know that among these merchants and civilians whom you have basely attempted to revile, are many men of great candor, probity, integrity, and virtue—that their intercourse with society is kind and benevolent, and that they are justly esteemed valuable members of community. It is also well known that our clergy as a body, are discreet, amiable, pious men, faithfully and steadily pursuing the great duties of their profession, and diffusing peace and happiness among the people. While preparing your envenomed shafts for their vitals, you should have asked these questions—Did

not the clergy of Connecticut unite cordially in producing the American revolution? Have they not uniformly attempted to promote good order in society? Have not their prayers, sermons, and example, had some influence in restraining the licentious and unprincipled? Do not many individuals rejoice in their fervor and piety? And is it kind, in me, to represent them as entirely unworthy of confidence? Shall I promote the felicity of my fellow citizens by attempting to destroy their affection for the clergy? If I should convert our churches into temples of reason, and guillotine the ministers of religion, should I render any essential good to mankind, or commend myself to the favor of God? If the sabbath were abolished and the people of Connecticut, instead of assembling, once in seven days to worship their Creator, should celebrate the decade, and prostrate themselves before the goddess of liberty, would they be better husbands—better wives—better parents—better children—better neighbours—better citizens or better rulers? Should I render any benefit to the old man of eighty, were I to convince him that the belief in “twenty Gods—no God—or one living and true God” is perfectly immaterial? Should I do him no injury by unsettling his faith, and driving him from that confidence in christianity which has been to him “an anchor to the soul,” into that doubt and perplexity which presents nothing but the gloomy valley of the shadow of death?

If you had made some such enquiries, with the least candor, you might have saved yourself from some portion of that infamy which now assuredly awaits you.

I will now reply to some of your observations as they occur with as little regard to order, if possible, as you have shewn in making them.

In a note in page 31st. you say “The Republican” (meaning the Democratic) “interest is firm-

ly attached to the *constitution*." This, Sir, comes with an ill grace indeed from you.—You who preached on all occasions and in all companies, and with all manner of abuse, against that constitution—you, who explicitly decry all commerce, an object of immense importance in that constitution.—You, who have *curst* every measure of the administration (except when seeking an office) you now *fainly* applaud it in a *cowardly note*. Do you apprehend that you can delude any body by such a snare? The truth is, you now *bate* and always have *bated* that constitution, and this pretended affection of yours is like the perfidious kiss of Judas.

In page 36, you say you are "willing to be governed by men greater, wiser, and richer than yourself." This is the first sentiment, on which I have had occasion to congratulate you. It is fortunate that you have come to this conclusion; for if there should ever be a time when you were not willing to be governed by men "greater and wiser" than yourself, you would find your inclinations *cruelly thwarted*. Indeed, so highly does your prejudice against great and wise men, rise, that you say, in the same page, that "we have already a number of men too great for a Republic:" and, like an honest and good subject, you are determined never to add to their number, and therefore are assiduously laboring to *belittle* yourself; but I assure you that your exertions have already been successful, and you have attained your object, beyond the possibility of a defeat.

In page 42 you rage vehemently against the aristocracy of Connecticut, in appointments to office. The pamphlet, to which I have once and again alluded, has pointed out the absurdity of your whining on this subject. You hold four offices—one of those your father gave you—two of the others, you received from the Court in which *he presides*—

the fourth was procured by the recommendation of *his friends*. And do you really believe that if you had rested on the suffrages of the freemen of Connecticut, that you could have obtained either of them? I leave this question with you and your acquaintance; and thus dismiss your rant about aristocracy.

In a note to page 42, you aim a compliment to President Adams. It is rather singular that your applause should all come in *notes*, but it is perfectly characteristic of you and your Oration. It is still more singular that you should utter a syllable in favour of Mr. Adams; for it has ever appeared to your acquaintance, that if there were any *degrees* in your malevolence towards great and good men, the President was the object of your most deliberate hatred.

In page 46 you have *unluckily* hit upon the simile of the "Box of Glafs" with a "Keep this side up."—Do you remember your recantation of your sentiments when you solicited the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court? Do you recollect what you then said and did, and wrote? Where Mr. Changling, is that COCKADE which you wore in 1798, as a badge of federalism? "Keep this side up"—Your "box of glafs" is marked on *every side* with a "keep *this* side up;" and it will therefore probably be broken as all good men wish it may be.

In page 48, you pay a compliment, *in a note again*, to a number of democrats. But this is an expensive compliment to your party in New-England. Is there no Democrat, north of New-York, worthy to be mentioned with those *chosen few*, except Mr. Samuel Adams? What, no *pious* Priestly

* See Rod for fool's back.

in New-England to disseminate his *pure* and *useful* truths among this *deluded* people? No Monroe to negotiate treaties with great Republics? No Gallatin, directly from Geneva, to teach our citizens how to make an *insurrection* against the government of their Country? Oh *ill-fated* New-England!—And now Mr. Bishop, what do you think “Paul of Tarsus” would say to these *chosen few*, if he knew their characters as well as you and I do?†

In pages 49 and 50 you have endeavoured to amuse your audience with several *federal toasts*. Perhaps those drank at Mr. Jefferson’s dinner, on Sunday, at Fredericksburgh in Virginia, in May 1798, would have been more congenial to your feelings. On that day and on that occasion, your “distinguished citizen,” joined in a set of toasts calculated to condemn, in the severest manner, the President and the government of the United States.

In page 60, you say “it may be well for you (addressing your audience) to know that the support of your government costs you 42,000 dollars a day,”—and I say, it may be well for them and you, to know that here you have made a *slight error* of 14,000 dollars; and it may be *very well* for them and you to know that in your appendix, to which you here refer, you have made a *blunder* of five millions of dollars in the estimate of 15,000,000 for expenditures for the year 1800. Now a *reformer* should certainly be more correct—a *financier* should understand the *four first rules in Arithmetic*.

In page 36, there is quite a novel doctrine advanced. Your words are “but never let it be forgotten that the argument drawn from the coincidence of *great*, and *wise* and *holy* politicians in public measures is, of all others the most alarming. These are

† I mean not here to include either Maddison, Dickinson or Adams. The first I respect—the others I do not know.

the *only* men whom you have to fear. If some are apparently *more holy* than their neighbours, then if they meddle with your politics, they are most capable of deceiving you: their holiness may recommend them to heaven, but is NO GUARANTEE FOR THEIR POLITICAL RECTITUDE." Here is a species of reasoning which I think will unfold your true character, and will display the design and tendency of your oration. Here, Sir, is a solemn caution against appointing "great and wise and holy" men to manage political concerns: and a plain inference is, that *little and foolish and unholy* men are to be substituted in their stead. Were not the subject too serious, I should say this is electioneering for *yourself*, with great address. Here you avow that "holiness" is no "guarantee for political rectitude." What security then have we for "political rectitude?" It would have been extremely kind for you to have told your "listening audience" what characters are suited to govern mankind: Or did you avoid it lest you should be charged with speaking of *yourself*?

But, Mr. Bishop, to be more serious with you, Do you not mean, by the sentiments just quoted, to deny that a principle of holiness does exist? Do you not represent that the distinctions between wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, piety and impiety, are idle and useless, mere creatures of the imagination and rest on no solid foundation?—You mean this precisely, or you mean that which is still more horrid, viz. That vice, folly and impiety are more excellent qualities than virtue, wisdom and holiness, especially in a ruler.—Ask Christians what they think of such sentiments? Ask all who possess any remains of morality, if the prevalence of such opinions would not soon convert this world into a dreary waste of wretchedness and woe? Ask these questions, and then read that solemn declaration of the living God contained in 2d Samuel xxiii. chap.

3d verse. "The God of Israel said—the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just ruling in the fear of God."

The passages which I have just quoted are introductory to your unqualified praise of Mr. Jefferson, to subserve whose election to the Presidency, you have laboured, with a *zeal* which deserved a *better cause*, and in a *manner* which would *disgrace any cause*.

Of this gentleman, you have indeed spoken favorably, and to prove him worthy of the confidence of the people of Connecticut, you have dilticated on his learning, greatness and goodness. But is he not too "great a man for a Republic?" Must you not take *his* "altitude" with a quadrant?" You have through a tedious oration of 64 pages, labored to convince your readers, that wisdom and greatness were noxious qualities in a ruler:—Here your favorite is exalted to the heavens by the profusion of them!—Strange contradictions! You have forgotten "*Keep this side up.*"

But, Sir, I agree with you Mr. Jefferson is a learned man—an ingenious man—a Philosopher.—I know not but that he is honest in his intercourse with society and amiable in private life; there is however strong reason to believe that he is an obstinate infidel.—Adam Smith, the celebrated author of the *Wealth of Nations*, characterising David Hume, observed that he approached nearer to divinity than any man he ever knew.—Yet how bitter an enemy to Christianity was David Hume?

You say Mr. J. supports a minister of the gospel at his own expense.—If this be true, I think it would be honorable to religion and its minister if *he would attend* his ministrations and not confine

* See page 36.

them to his servants. But, Sir, it is a well established fact that Mr. J. never has attended public worship during a residence of several years in New-York and Philadelphia. Why not? His friends *pretend* that it was because the clergy *abused him* for his political sentiments.—This is untrue—but if true, is it an answer? Would a lover of the worship of God neglect it for such a reason? Would Daniel—would “Paul of Tarsus” have thus conducted?

Again. You say in your last page and confirm it in your last note, that he spoke “reverently of God.” So has Thomas Paine, Godwin, Rousseau, Hume, Bollingbroke and Gibbon with almost every other avowed enemy of Christianity. The greatest and most malignant scoffers at religion, frequently speak, in the most exalted terms, of the Supreme Being; but when they define his attributes or speak of his moral government, then, their impiety and monstrous absurdities, rise into view.

These champions in the cause of infidelity, without a single exception, and your oration is a signal proof of the proposition, level their artillery against the *ministers* and *professors* of religion, and thus aim the “dagger of death” at its vitals. If any person will read Paine’s *Age of Reason* and compare his abuse of ministers and Christians with your jeers and ridicule at the same objects, he will perceive as near a coincidence, as situation and climate will permit.

Let me now examine the passage from Jefferson’s notes quoted in your appendix, to vindicate him from the charge of infidelity, first remarking that the introduction to that quotation is *borrowed*.

The sentiment so often commented upon, is in these words, “But it does me no injury for my

neighbour to say there are twenty Gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." Here Mr. J. is attempting to show the impropriety of legislative interference in matters of religion. If he had said that faith was not a subject of legislation I would subscribe to the opinion; but he unquestionably means that it is not injurious to individuals or society for a man to declare that there are twenty Gods, or that there is no God, and consequently that there should be no law against blasphemy and therefore clearly, none against profanity of any kind, because those vices do neither "pick pockets nor break legs." But wise legislators have thought different on this subject. In this state there is a statute against blasphemy, sanctioned with severe penalties—there is also a law against profane swearing. This is the case in the country whence we emigrated and I believe in all the states of New-England, perhaps in many others.—Nay, all well regulated communities punish men for slandering individuals, and for reviling the government of their country. This is not complained of here or in Virginia. On what principle do these laws rest? Doubtless on this; that the peace of society shall not be disturbed nor the confidence of people in their rulers, be destroyed by falsehood and calumny.—But alas! the religion of the bible—the Saviour of sinners—the God of the universe, may be profaned, derided or blasphemed, with impunity!

And is it indeed no injury to me, as an individual, or as a member of society, that our streets should resound with oaths and cursings?—That children should hear, in every lane and alley, the name and attributes of God contemned? Will not the prevalence of such practices, efface the fear and reverence of God from the young and tender mind, and produce that contempt for every thing sacred, which leaves the heart a prey to every corrupt propensity? Parents and Christians will think of these

things and regret that Mr. Jefferson should have been the author of such sentiments ; and that our temples should be theatres to recommend them.

In another part of this quotation Mr. J. speaking of New-York and Pennsylvania, says, " religion is well supported, of *various kinds* indeed ; but ALL GOOD ENOUGH ; all sufficient to preserve peace and order." Two things are inferable from this passage ; first that the only benefit resulting from religion, is the preservation of the peace and order of society, and secondly that, for this purpose, all the various religions in those states were *equally good*. A strange sentiment for a Christian ! for a Christian did I say ? No Christian, unless deluded, could utter it. We are here taught that religion is confined in its benefits to this world—that it is simply designed to make men peaceable and orderly, and that *any* kind of religion is good enough for the attainment of this end. And now, Sir, let me ask whether if the " Bishop of Ephesus" had been in the pulpit of that house, which you profaned, he would have addressed his " listening audience" thus ? " Men and brethren.—It is of no consequence whether men say there are twenty Gods or no God—all the various kinds of religion, Jewish and Roman catholic, and all others are good enough for the purposes of society, and *beyond that* they are of no importance.—Greatness, wisdom and holiness are injurious qualities in a ruler.—Ministers of religion and professors, should be shunned and avoided as the pests of society. Holiness of heart is no guarantee for political rectitude : and wisdom and virtue are combined to destroy you ; and finally, let me exhort you to use *all* means to elect Mr. Jefferson President of the United States."

Or if " Paul of Tarsus" had been one of *your* " listening audience," do you think he would have thought it proper, *as a preacher of righteousness*, to

have applauded your oration with smiles and gestures of peculiar approbation? It is much more probable to me that he would have rose and, with that Christian intrepidity, for which he was celebrated, have addressed you, as he formerly did Elymas the sorcerer, who sought to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith, and as Bishop Watson did Thomas Paine, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

LETTER III.

I WILL now examine your conduct in attempting to influence the election which took place on the Monday after the oration was spoken, and contrast it with some sentiments which you have there uttered.

In the town of Hamden your efforts were conspicuous. You went there several times in the dead of night—distributed nominations for assistants, and directed the men to be voted for in the delegation to Congress; and to aid and promote the changes which you desired to effect, you propagated the most palpable falsehoods: and, to finish your infamy, on your return to New-Haven, you boasted that you had *revolutionized* Hamden.

With the same views and, by the same base and foul means, you intrigued in East-Haven, West-Haven, and North-Haven.

On the Friday night before freemen's meeting, you went to Wallingford—disseminated your orations—repeated, to a collection of people some of

the most inflammatory passages, and wrote and dispersed a great number of nominations, leaving no artifice untried to effect your vile purposes.

By your own confessions your labors in New-Haven are known. You have confessed, Sir, that New-Haven was divided by the Democrats into districts—that men were appointed to operate in these districts, and to *enlighten* the freemen and influence their votes—that lists were made out, containing the names of the Federalists, the doubtful, and the Democrats, and that established Democrats were appointed to convince and confirm the wavering. You have pointed out the boundaries of the district over which you presided—acknowledged that you rose early, on the morning of the election, went towards Dragon bridge, found *nine* of your men on the spot, dispatched *those nine* to others, and finally that you collected all *your men* except one, and had them all in town, by nine in the morning, you yourself “bringing up the rear.” And to exhibit the extent of your iniquity, you confessed to respectable people, the night after the election, “that the object of the Democrats was to get into office.” I omit here to mention the vigilance with which, for weeks, you sought every opportunity to inflame the passions of the people, by all the slander of which you were master, against men whose talents and virtue will forever look you into contempt. I omit to mention that this nomination was, by you, given to many who knew nothing of the characters—who did not know Roswell Judson, Esq. from George Penrose or Henry H. Childs.*—I omit to enumerate the acts of your party—that Hezekiah Bissell, Esq. whose name was on that nomination, carried it to Windham and there attempted to give it currency—that this same Roswell Judson promoted it in Stratford while

* See appendix page 7.

his father was engaged in the same business in Huntington and Trumbull.—But I *cannot omit* to ask you, what you now think of “unbiased elections,” of a new election’s opening to republicans a *new* and most *desirable* prospect?”—of “federal policy?” “of opportunities to express opinions, on federal men and measures?” What do you think “of the people’s BEING LEFT TO *exercise* FREE AND UNBIASED ELECTIONS?” Of the “delusions which have attended *past* elections?” Of the “trump of a new election?” What do you think of a new election’s having “*exactly* all the influence” of men in places? What say you to the “Election Ball” at which “*republicans* bleed at every pore?”—What think you, now, of, “ladies and gentlemen this is Republicanism?” What do you think of the people’s being “hailed about by a federal *windlass*?” Of “*confidence* in the people, the only basis, on which a republic can rest?” Of the “*outs* and *ins* and that the *outs* wish to be *in*?” What say you, to “rational freedom’s being turned into slavery unchangeable, by *delusive* measures?” Of the “Sovereignty of the people WHICH ALWAYS RESTS ON UNBIASED ELECTIONS!!!” What say you to “ANOTHER ELECTIONEERING DELUSION”?!!!* Oh thou pure disinterested lover of *liberty*! thou preacher *against* *influence*—thou orator of the *people*—thou REFORMER of elections in Connecticut!!! Thou essence of CONNECTICUT REPUBLICANISM!!! How amiable—how great—how wise are your “HANDY WORKS?”

When, Sir, I reflect on your conduct as it respects the peace of society—when I view you exerting every “*Lilliputian power*” of your soul, to corrupt the morals of the citizens, and destroy all purity of elections—When I view you boasting that you *revolutionized* Hamden—that you *drove* the

* See preface—also pages 37—38—42—43—44—46—50—52—53—54.

freemen of New-Haven before you as your *creatures*—When I see you in North-Haven, East-Haven and Wallingford attempting every base art of electioneering—When I hear sober people in those towns exclaim that they were peaceable till A. Bishop came among them—When I reflect on these things, I feel, alternately, the emotions of pity and contempt—of anger and indignation—I feel that society should *arm* against such a deadly foe to the dearest interests of freemen.

But these feelings are speedily converted into those of an opposite character, when I reflect how little you *can* effect—how little you *have* effected—how uniformly your schemes, through life, *have proved abortive*. Then I am ready to *smile* at your folly and insignificance—to view you, on these electioneering excursions, and on the stage, as the harmless successor of Dr. Willoughby,* when returning from *peddling out his golden gout ointment* as a specific for all diseases. Indeed so striking is the resemblance that it is possible you may hereafter obtain the name of Dr. Willoughby, on the same principle that we call any great Philosopher a *Newton*: and that every company which you enter, will say “there’s Dr. Willoughby”—and that his *golden gout ointment*, and your *oration on political delusion*, will hereafter mutually bring each other to the mind.

And when my mind is thus quiet, I am really disposed that you should receive some honorable marks of notice, as a compensation for your ‘unwearied labors’; and for this purpose I submit the following project to you and the public.—If the “American palace and dark vault”† which you mention, in your preface, should, instead of being

* A noted quack in medicine who has travelled thro’ Litchfield, Hartford and New-Haven counties, peddling out for all diseases, his *golden gout ointment*.

† See Preface.

the "tomb of American liberties," become a democratic hall, I propose, as a splendid decoration, that it should be ornamented with the portraits of Bartholomew Burges,† Abraham Bishop and Thomas Paine. And, in future times, strangers will enter this hall, and be conducted from one curiosity to another, till at length, they will arrive to this venerable group of characters.—Their guide will then stop, and with a phiz and a voice *not unlike those lately seen and heard on the subject of freedom of elections*, he will thus begin, "There, ladies and gentlemen, is A. Bishop, Esq. county surveyor of New-Haven county, and author of an oration on *political delusion*, entitled "Connecticut Republicanism."—*That is* Bartholomew Burges, who in 1789 projected a new system for the revolution of the heavenly bodies and predicted an approaching comet.—The other, the superior of both in talents, is Thomas Paine, who boldly published his "age of reason," and thus attacked ancient systems of divinity. These three *worthies* were contemporaries at the close of the 18th century: and because the one discovered an approaching *monarchy* and informed the people of their *delusion* in defiance of all the great and good men of his day—the other proclaimed the appearance of a *comet* in 1789—the third, about the same period, discovered that the bible was a forgery, and that the "age of reason" was *at hand*, therefore these venerable men are thus honorably distinguished, and their names and virtues transmitted to posterity, with a particular request that all who handle these portraits, would remember to "*KEEP THIS SIDE UP.*"

Oct. 1, 1800.

† A quack in astronomy who predicted a comet in 1789.

